

# What recreational stream protections mean

As the DNR works to bring Iowans greater water quality and safety by revising Iowa's water quality standards, it is recommending designated uses for Iowa streams. This assessment process is all part of establishing new goals and levels of protection for Iowa's water, levels of protection that did not exist before 2006.

## We're adding protections to our streams

Before 2006, only 2,276 miles of Iowa streams were protected for recreational uses like swimming, fishing and wading. Only about 12,000 miles were designated to protect fish and other aquatic life. Now, the DNR has extended protection to about 26,000 miles of perennial streams for both recreational use and for aquatic life.

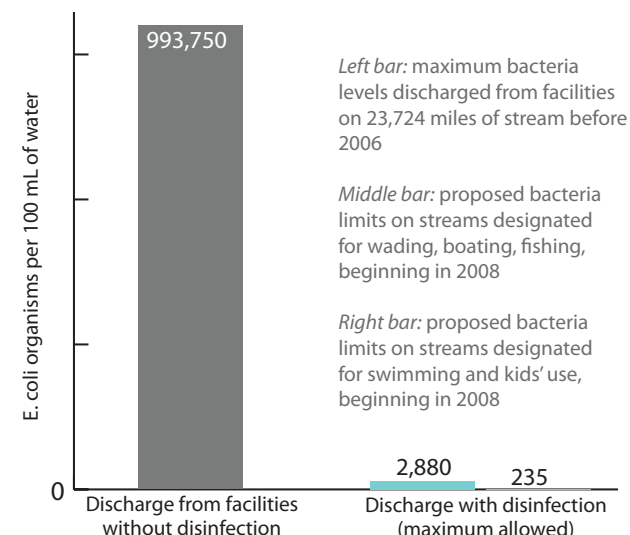
The DNR's current rulemaking effort, which proposes to designate these streams for recreational use, will protect thousands of miles of streams that **never** had any level of protection before 2006.

The DNR will propose use designations in groups. Of the first group of streams, about 1,400 stream miles could be used for swimming or by children. Another 2,900 miles are not expected to be used for swimming, but for shoreline activities like fishing. Stream use designations are goals – they protect for the possibility that someone may use that stream for recreation.

These two uses (swimming/kids use and shoreline) differ only slightly in the amount of protection, and all miles of stream will receive a much higher protection than ever before (see chart below).

## Maximum bacteria limits and stream uses

Protecting a stream for recreational uses would greatly decrease the amount of bacteria allowed in the stream from wastewater treatment facilities under Iowa DNR's proposed water quality standards.



## Protections will lessen pollution

The DNR is looking at streams that receive a discharge from facilities with a National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permits, like wastewater treatment facilities and industrial plants like meat packers or metal finishers.

When streams are designated for recreational use and aquatic life, like the 4,500 miles of stream the DNR is currently recommending, it may mean stricter limits on what can be discharged into these streams.

These stricter limits, for shoreline uses like fishing, will provide 345 times more protection from bacteria entering the streams from facilities. Streams designated for swimming and children's play will be protected even more. This protection comes from upgraded wastewater systems, which may cost hundreds of millions of dollars to put in place across the state.

The DNR's recommendation for the highest possible recreational use – whether swimming, kids' use or shoreline activities – will result in less pollution entering the stream. Water quality improvements should be seen locally.

## This is just the beginning

The DNR has completed fieldwork to assess the uses of all Iowa streams that receive a discharge from an NPDES facility. About a third of the assessments have been written and are ready for public comments on what protections the streams should receive. As the other stream assessments are written the DNR will present them to the public and have a comment period for those streams as well.

## What do my comments do?

The DNR will consider your comments as it designates which recreational uses are appropriate for different streams. The DNR realizes that its stream assessments, while thorough, are conducted relatively quickly. The DNR is asking Iowans, through public comment periods, to provide new information on how these streams are used to ensure the recommendations are accurate.

## Questions or comments?

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